

# The English cleft-construction

## *It*-clefts\*

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the structure of *it*-clefts. I begin with an enumeration of the most important properties of cleft sentences. Then I discuss former analyses of clefts that view the clefted constituent as identificational focus. In the last part of the paper I present further evidence in support of the Focus Phrase analysis and modify previously assumed structures. Specifically, I argue that analyzing the clefted constituent as identificational focus gives a natural explanation of the distribution of the high pitch accent in *it*-clefts. In addition, I give an account of the extraordinary direction of tense dependency attested in clefts, whereby the tense of the higher clause depends on the tense of the lower clause. I propose that in the higher clause the tense feature is unvalued on both the copula and T. These tense features are valued either by receiving a default value (present), or by feature sharing with T in the lower clause. My results support Pesetsky and Torrego's (2007) proposal for the abandonment of the Valuation/Interpretability Biconditional.

The term 'cleft sentence' was coined by Otto Jespersen in 1937. A cleft construction comprises four main parts. These are the following:

- (1)
- |   |                                  |  |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| <sup>1</sup> It<br><i>cleft pronoun</i>                         | <sup>2</sup> is<br><i>copula</i> | <sup>3</sup> a shooting star<br><i>cleft(ed) constituent</i> |
| <sup>4</sup> that you can see in the sky<br><i>cleft clause</i> |                                  |  |

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There is no consensual view on the exact characterisation of these parts and the nature of the relations holding between them. Let us now have a brief look at the main standpoints on these issues. We begin with the different views on the characterisation of the individual parts.

The first subpart of the cleft sentence, the cleft pronoun, is held to be either an expletive (Chomsky 1977; Heggie 1988; É. Kiss 1999) or a fully referential pronoun (Gundel 1977; Hedberg 2000). The copula, too, is treated as an expletive element in some analyses (Chomsky 1977; Delahunty 1984). In other studies, however, it has some semantic function (Heggie 1988; É. Kiss 1999). The clefted constituent is assumed to be an embedded topic in Chomsky (1977) but syntactic focus in É. Kiss (1999) and Meinunger (1996). Finally, the cleft clause is looked upon as a restrictive relative clause in Knowles (1986), and as an ordinary embedded clause in many recent studies, for instance É. Kiss (1999).

As for the relationship between the parts of the cleft construction, there are two opposing views. The first one claims that the cleft clause is in a direct syntactic relationship with the cleft pronoun, the cleft clause being extraposed (e.g. Akmajian 1970). Under the other analysis the cleft clause bears a direct syntactic relationship to the clefted element itself (e.g. É. Kiss 1999). The first position is dubbed as the extraposition analysis, and the second as the expletive analysis by Hedberg (2000).

## 2 CLEFT TAXONOMY AND TERMINOLOGY

Cleft sentences do not constitute a single type: they are divided into different subgroups based on their syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties. The classification of clefts in the literature, however, is not in the least uniform. Depending on the classificational criteria, clefts can be divided into subgroups in several ways, and different researchers distinguish different subtypes of clefts indeed.

In this section we examine only the most important groupings of cleft sentences: the distinction between *it*-clefts and *wh*-clefts on the one hand, and *specificational* and *predicational* clefts on the other. In the last subsection, I summarise the classification of *it*-clefts proposed by Heggie (1993) because in Section 5.4 I argue specifically against this particular grouping.

### 2.1 *It*-clefts versus *wh*-clefts

The best-known division, and the one which is acknowledged by every researcher, is that between *it*-clefts (also called simply clefts) and *wh*-clefts

(also termed pseudo-clefts). Examples are given in (2) and (3).

(2) It was a piece of chestnut cake that Lizzy ordered.

(3) What Lizzy ordered was a piece of chestnut cake.

*It*-clefts and *wh*-clefts differ with respect to the types of phrases that can be clefted (vP clefting is typically ungrammatical with *it*-clefts but grammatical with *wh*-clefts) and the order in which old and new information is presented (new > old for *it*-clefts but old > new for *wh*-clefts) (Prince 1978).<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I am concerned only with *it*-clefts and I am not going to address questions relating to *wh*-clefts.

## 2.2 Specificational and predicational clefts

For Declerck (1983), clefts are *specificational* in the default case: they identify a value for a variable, as in (4).<sup>2</sup>

(4) It is food for the dog that I don't eat.

(Declerck 1983: 11)

In (4) the cleft clause (*that I don't eat*) specifies the conditions of the variable's interpretation (the variable is 'something I don't eat') and the clefted constituent (*food for the dog*) denotes the value specified for it. The variable acts like the heading of a list and the value specified for it functions as the list itself. That is, (4) can be paraphrased as *The following I don't eat: food that is meant for dogs*.

When the lexical material of the head of the clefted constituent excludes the specificational interpretation, we obtain purely predicational clefts, as in (5):

(5) a. It is such an idiot who says that that you should not pay any attention to him.

b. It was no fool who wrote this.

(Declerck 1983: 39)

While degree modifiers (e.g. *such an*) can attach to predicative elements, they are incompatible with specificational ones. Thus, in (5a) the head *idiot* must be predicational. The head of the clefted item in (5b) is also necessarily predicational, given that in postcopular DPs, the substitution of *no* for *not*

<sup>1</sup>These differences were observed in a corpus of 37 *wh*-clefts and 186 *it*-clefts. In this corpus, vP-clefting with *it*-clefts was unattested. See, however, Footnote 3.

<sup>2</sup>Specificational sentences are sometimes also called *equational* or *equative*.

*a* is licensed if and only if the DP is predicational. Note also that in these examples the clefted item does not identify a value for a variable the way it does in example (4); it only states one of its properties.

In case the predicational element is not the head itself but a modifier of the head, the cleft sentence shares properties with both specificational and predicational sentences (6). The description of the exact nature of this dual patterning as well as its explanation fall outside the scope of this paper. For a detailed discussion, the reader is referred to Declerck (1983).

- (6) Was it an interesting meeting you went to last night?  
(Declerck 1983: 16)

### 2.3 Syntactic and metalinguistic clefts

Heggie (1993) describes two kinds of *it*-clefts: syntactic and metalinguistic ones. Syntactic clefts have DPs/arguments in the position of the clefted element, and their reading is – according to Heggie – ambiguous between what she calls a basic informational reading (no contrast is involved, as in (7)) and a strongly contrastive reading (which signals contrast with a previous sentence, as in (8)).

- (7) Who mowed the lawn?  
It was Mrs Solis that mowed the lawn.
- (8) Who mowed the lawn?  
John, the gardener did.  
No! It was Mrs Solis that mowed the lawn.

Metalinguistic clefts, on the other hand, have adjectives/adjuncts in the position of the clefted item. They are always used contrastively (9), and the basic informational reading is unavailable (10).

- (9) What colour are her eyes?  
It's green that her eyes are.
- (10) What colour are her eyes?  
Her eyes are green.  
Yes, it's SUPER green that her eyes are.  
No, it's BLUE that her eyes are, not green. (Heggie 1993: 50)

### 3 SYNTACTIC, PROSODIC AND SEMANTIC PROPERTIES OF CLEFTS

In this section, we turn to the syntactic, prosodic and semantic properties of cleft sentences. This overview is based on Akmajian (1970); Declerck (1983); Delahunty (1984); Heggie (1993); É. Kiss (1999); Hedberg (2000) and Lambrecht (2001).

#### 3.1 Syntactic properties

##### I) *Constituency*

The clefted element must be a constituent:

- (11) a. It's [throwing snowballs at the scarecrow] that Liz enjoys.
- b. \*It's [throwing snowballs] that Liz enjoys *t* at the scarecrow.
- c. \*It's [snowballs at the scarecrow] that Liz enjoys throwing *t*.

The clefted element forms a syntactic constituent with the cleft clause. They act as a unit in tests of deletion (12), conjunction (13) and right-node raising (14). Since syntactic operations can be performed only on constituents, the clefted element and the cleft clause must belong together as a single constituent.

- (12) The king said that it should have been the viceroy who led the army, and it should have been.
- (13) It must have been the president who undertook the task but the vice president who actually performed it.
- (14) It could have been – and it should have been – the viceroy who led the army.

##### II) *Cleft pronouns*

Besides *it*, the cleft pronoun can also be a demonstrative pronoun. Clefts containing *it*, however, are statistically far more frequent.

- (15) This is Jesse James and his brother Frank we are talking about, not two bunglers.<sup>3</sup>
- (16) That was his father and grandfather who advised him to join the navy.
- (17) Those are real Levi's 501 jeans that Kim is wearing.

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<sup>3</sup>(15) and (16) are somewhat degraded without context. In an appropriate context, however, they are perfectly felicitous.

III) *The copula: tense*

The tense of the copula agrees with the tense of the embedded verb (tense harmony, as shown in (18a)) or it is a default present tense (this does not yield a true temporal setting, see (18b)).

- (18) a. It was Henry Ford's company that produced the Model T.  
 b. It is Henry Ford's company that produced the Model T.

IV) *The copula: agreement*

The copula is always in the singular form.

- (19) It is/was Louise and Clark that organized the fireworks.  
 (20) \*It are/were Louise and Clark that organized the fireworks.

V) *The clefted constituent: what can(not) be clefted*

Principally, DPs and PPs are clefted. Other phrases, such as vPs,<sup>4</sup> APs, AdvPs and clauses<sup>5</sup> cannot be clefted (or need special context, as in (21e) and (21g)).

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<sup>4</sup>Occasionally we do find examples of vP clefting. In these cases, a resumptive proform *do* is required in the cleft clause. Note that a resumptive proform is not obligatory in the clefting of other phrases.

- (i) a. It was give up that Billy didn't want to do/\* $\emptyset$ .  
 b. It is study harder that Bill must do/\* $\emptyset$ .

(Delahunty 1984: 111)

<sup>5</sup>Potential counterexamples to the non-cleftability of clauses are given below. Delahunty (1984) argues that in all cases where the clefted element seems to be a clause, it is a DP or a PP in fact.

- (i) a. It is that Bob left without a word that surprised me.  
 (sentential subject clefts – analysed as DPs)  
 b. It was that she promised to post the letters that Louise forgot.  
 (factive complements are shown to be DPs)  
 c. It is that they will clone man that many scientists believe/promise.  
 (complements of *believe* and *promise* are argued to be DPs)  
 d. It was to find his daughter that Mr. Bennet went to London.  
 (of all infinitivals only purpose infinitivals are cleftable – they are analysed as PPs)  
 e. It was that pigs fly that we persuaded Fred. (Delahunty 1984: 86)  
 f. It is for Chomsky to give a lecture that linguists are eager.  
 (sentential complements of *persuade* and *eager* are demonstrated to be PPs, with the preposition undergoing Preposition Deletion)

- (21) a. It is the Chief Resident that ordered the chest X-ray.  
 b. It is behind the wardrobe that Lucy found a new world.  
 c. \*It is draw a caricature of the boss that I saw him.  
 d. \*It was tired that he was. (É. Kiss 1998a: 218)  
 e. It was not sick that he was but tired. (É. Kiss 1998a: 218)  
 f. \*It was happily that I went home.  
 g. It is only temporarily that they closed down the Olympic Stadium.  
 h. \*It was that you kept my secret that I was happy about.

Expletives cannot be clefted.

- (22) a. \*It's [it] that *t* seems that Liz is out of danger.  
 b. \*It's [there] that *t* is somebody at the door.

Phrases modified by *even* also cannot be clefted. Moreover, phrases modified by *also* can only be clefted in special contexts.

- (23) \*It was even to Carol that Doug gave a lift.  
 (24) – Doug gave a lift to almost everyone.  
 – \*Yes, it was also to Carol that Doug gave a lift.  
 (25) – Doug gave a lift only to Carol.  
 – No, it was also to Judi that Doug gave a lift.

Universal quantifiers that are not within the scope of negation cannot be clefted either.

- (26) \*It was everybody that Doug gave a lift to.  
 (27) a. What a nice piece of work! It is not everyone that can do this.  
 b. It is not everybody that cares for early Staffordshire pottery.  
 (Declerck 1984: 283)

#### VI) The clefted constituent: PPs

When clefting PPs, 'the embedded clause may lack an otherwise obligatory preposition (...), [while] in an ordinary relative clause we find the opposite situation' (É. Kiss 1998a: 218–219; example sentences are also hers). This is illustrated in (28) for clefts and in (29) for relative clauses.

- (28) a. It was to John that I spoke.  
 b. \*It was to John that I spoke to.  
 (29) a. \*He gave the book to the man that I spoke  
 b. He gave the book to the man that I spoke to.

VII) *The clefted constituent: case*

Clefted pronouns bear accusative case, even if they correspond to the subject of the cleft clause.

- (30) a. It is me who left a message for you.  
b. It is me who Navi supports in the campaign.

VIII) *The cleft clause: agreement*

Cleft clauses show intriguing agreement patterns. When the clefted element is associated with the subject of the cleft clause, the verb in the cleft clause is invariably third person. As (É. Kiss 1999: 218) puts it: ‘if the cleft subject is other than 3rd person, the embedded verb does not agree with it’. In my opinion, it would be more accurate to say that the verb never agrees with the clefted subject. The verb in the cleft clause bears third person as a default value, or it agrees with the cleft pronoun. When the clefted subject is in the third person, the agreement between the verb and the clefted element is an epiphenomenon.

- (31) a. It is me who is the boss here.  
b. It is you who is the boss here.  
c. It is him/her who is the boss here.

Reflexives in the cleft clause can be non-agreeing (third person throughout) as in (32), or agreeing (33). (32a) and (33) are used with a meaning difference: *himself* answers the question *Who made a fool of himself*, while *myself* answers the question *Who made a fool of you* (Akmajian 1970).

- (32) a. It is me who made a fool of himself.  
b. It is you who made a fool of himself.  
c. It is him/her who made a fool of himself.  
d. It is you and me that made a fool of themselves.

- (33) It is me who has made a fool of myself.

While there may not be person agreement between the clefted subject and the embedded verb, a systematic number agreement is attested:<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>It has to be noted, though, that the person-agreement pattern between the subject, the embedded verb and reflexive pronoun described in X) is not the only existing one. Akmajian (1970) mentions two other dialects with slightly different patterns. Let us call the agreement pattern in X) Dialect 1. Compare that with Dialects 2 and 3.

Dialect 2: the clefted pronoun can be nominative, but the verb does not agree with it in person.



- (34) a. It is me/you (singular)/him that does the research on Renaissance painting.  
 b. It is us/you (plural)/they that do the research on Renaissance painting.

IX) *The cleft clause: connectedness effects*

The clefted constituent displays connectedness effects: it has properties that are licensed in a position within the cleft clause. This can be shown in clefts containing a reflexive or two quantifiers.

Specifically, the clefted constituent may be bound by an element inside the cleft clause, even though the clefted constituent is (S-)structurally higher than the cleft clause.

- (35) It was himself<sub>i</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> that Dorian Gray<sub>i</sub> saw in the mirror.]

In addition, a quantifier in the cleft clause can scope over the clefted constituent. This is worthy of note because quantifier raising is clause-bound, thus a quantifier in an embedded clause cannot have a matrix scope in general.

- (36) The New York Times wrote about some film starring Julianna Margulies that everybody wanted to watch.  
 (37) It was some film starring Julianna Margulies that everybody wanted to watch.

In (36) the quantifier is in an ordinary embedded clause. *Everybody* cannot have matrix scope; the only possible reading for (36) is:  $\exists > \forall$ . (37), on the other hand, involves a cleft clause. Here both scope configurations are possible between the existential and the universal quantifier:  $\exists > \forall$  and  $\forall > \exists$ . In the latter case, the embedded quantifier has matrix scope.

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- (i) a. It is I who is the boss here.  
 b. It is I who is being harassed.  
 c. It is me who George says is responsible.

The generalisation offered by Akmajian (1970) is the following: the clefted pronoun bears Nominative case if there is no surface subject in the cleft clause, otherwise it is marked for Accusative.

Dialect 3: the clefted pronoun can be Nominative. When this happens, the embedded verb agrees with it in person, too. In other cases the verb is third person.

- (ii) a. It is I who am/\*is the boss here.  
 b. It is me who \*am/is the boss here.

X) *Wh-elements heading the cleft clause*

It is possible for a *wh*-operator to head the cleft clause instead of the complementiser *that*.

- (38) It is a trip to Africa which I really want.

The acceptability of *wh*-elements in this position, however, is subject to dialectal variation: some dialects strongly prefer the complementiser over the *wh*-operator (but no dialect does the opposite).<sup>7</sup>

### 3.2 Prosodic properties

XI) *Intonation*

The clefted element and the cleft clause are ‘intonationally coherent’ (Lambrecht 2001: 464): no pause is possible between them.

XII) *Complementiser deletion*

The complementiser heading the cleft clause can be deleted in some dialects.

- (39) It is Mary Poppins I want to invite for dinner.

### 3.3 Semantic properties

XIII) *Presupposition in cleft constructions*

Cleft constructions, unlike their nonclefted counterparts, are presuppositional. (A sentence *S*<sub>1</sub> presupposes another sentence *S*<sub>2</sub> if and only if both *S*<sub>1</sub> and its negation,  $\neg S_1$ , logically imply *S*<sub>2</sub>.) Consider the following sentences.

- (40) Lizzy married Mr Darcy.  
 (41) Lizzy did not marry Mr Darcy.  
 (42) It was Mr Darcy that Lizzy married.

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<sup>7</sup>According to Akmajian (1970), only *who* and *which* are acceptable in this position:

- (i) a. It was Liz who/that cooked dinner for the children.  
 b. It was his way of presenting the news what/that surprised me.  
 c. It was in London \*where/that I found my sister.  
 d. It was 5 days ago \*when/that I posted the letter.  
 e. It was to frighten me \*why/that she hid behind the door.  
 f. It was by applying a heart massage \*how/that the doctor saved her life.

(43) It was not Mr Darcy that Lizzy married.

(44) Lizzy married somebody.

Of the nonclefted sentences only (40) implies (44). On the other hand, both cleft constructions imply (44). Note also that while (41) can be followed by a sentence like (45), this is not true of (43).

(45) In fact, she did not marry anybody at all.

It is because of the presuppositional nature of clefts that the following sentences are unacceptable:

- (46) a. #It was nobody who fell down the stairs.  
b. #It was nothing that he lent me.

(46a) presupposes the sentence *somebody fell down the stairs*. This, however, is inconsistent with the statement made in the cleft clause, namely that *nobody fell down*. This contradiction renders the sentence unacceptable. The same is true of (46b), where the opposition is between the proposition *he lent me nothing* and the presupposition *he lent me something*. Presuppositionality lies behind the contrast between (47a) and (47b), too:

- (47) a. #It was somebody that Lizzy married.  
b. It was somebody of considerable wealth that Lizzy married.

Both (47a) and (47b) presuppose the sentence *Lizzy married somebody*. The difference in grammaticality is due to the fact that while (47a) does not contain any 'new information' with respect to what is already presupposed, (47b) does. The term for 'new information' is information focus, and every sentence is required to contain it in some form or another (Ackerman & Goldberg 2001).<sup>8</sup> If this condition is not met, the sentence is ungrammatical; which is exactly what happens in (47a). (47b), on the other hand, contains the new information that *the person that Lizzy married is rich*; thus, the information focus requirement is fulfilled and the sentence is grammatical.

#### XIV) Exhaustive identification in cleft constructions

The clefted constituent expresses exhaustive identification. That is, it presupposes a set of entities *A* the predicate of the cleft clause can possibly hold for, and at the same time exhaustively identifies (i.e. lists all the members of) that proper subset *B* of *A* for which the predicate holds. This means that exhaustive identification always involves a complement set formation.

<sup>8</sup>Information focus is different from structural or identificational focus, which contains a focus operator (É. Kiss 1998a).

By defining the subset *B* of the base set *A* for which the predicate holds, we also define the complement set of *B*, for which the predicate does not hold. Because of exhaustive identification (49) is a logical consequence of (48).

- (48) It was Jack that sailed around the world in 25 days.  
 (49) Only one person sailed around the world in 25 days, and this person is Jack.

Whether or not a sentence expresses exhaustive identification can be tested by the ‘coordinate test’ presented in Szabolcsi (1981). This test involves a pair of sentences, the first of which contains a coordinated phrase as focus, while in the second sentence only one of the conjuncts of the original coordinated phrase is focussed. (In the literature, clefts are extensively argued to focus attention.) If the second sentence is contradictory to the first one, the first sentence expresses exhaustive identification. This test is applied to cleft constructions in the following pair of sentences:

- (50) It was a book and an article that I read during the holidays.  
 (51) It was a book that I read during the holidays.

Since (51) contradicts (50), the cleft constituent expresses exhaustive identification.

#### 4 CLEFT AS FOCUS

In the cleft literature, one often meets the term *focus*. As Jespersen puts it, ‘cleaving of a sentence by means of *it is* [...] serves to single out one particular element of the sentence and very often, by directing attention to it and bringing it, as it were, into focus, to mark a contrast’ (Jespersen 1949: 147–148).

In the generative framework almost every researcher identifies some kind of relationship between cleft sentences and focus. Akmajian (1970) calls the post-copular position the *focus position* and the clefted element is labelled *focus*. This terminology is taken up in Emonds (1976), Delahunty (1984) and Heggie (1993), too. Hedberg (2000: 891) describes clefts as special structures to ‘single out one element [...] in order to focus attention on it’. Lambrecht (2001) views *it is* as a *focus marker*.

It seems indisputable that cleft constructions are semantically interpreted as *focus constructions*. From the mid-1990s this has led a number of syntacticians to the idea that clefts should be analysed as *focus syntactically*, too. In this section, we are going to explore this possibility in detail.

#### 4.1 Two types of focus

The literature on syntactic focus differentiates two kinds of focus constructions. One is called *information focus* (É. Kiss 1998a) or *presentational focus* (Drubig 2003), also known as *wide* or *sentential focus*. These terms simply stand for new or non-presupposed information in the clause (cf. Ackerman & Goldberg 2001). This kind of focus is *in situ*, non-scopal and morphologically unmarked across languages.

Drubig (2003) also argues that the domain of presentational focus is the vP, and operations like scrambling, clitic doubling, object shift and other forms of argument externalisation 'seem to form a natural class of operations with the essential, though not exclusive, purpose of evacuating the focus domain from informationally inert material' (Drubig 2003: 9). It is not my objective to give a detailed account of this proposal in the present paper. Here it may suffice that under this assumption the above-mentioned movements are triggered by checking of the feature  $[-F]$ . For an in-depth discussion the reader should consult Holmberg (1999) and Drubig (2003).

What is interesting from our point of view is the other type of focus construction, called *identificational focus* in É. Kiss (1998a) and *focus topicalisation* in Drubig (2003) (sometimes dubbed as *narrow* or *contrastive focus*). This type of focus expresses exhaustive identification. Identificational focus is a scope-taking operator that binds a variable and semantically represents the value of this variable. In many languages identificational focus has prosodic prominence, bears non-nominative case and lacks grammatical agreement, but these are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for a constituent to be contrastive focus.

The functional projection whose specifier hosts identificational focus is labelled FocusP, and is situated on the left periphery of the clause. Rizzi's (2002) cartography theory places it under Force and above Fin, between two TopPs: Force > Top\* > Foc > Top\* > Fin > IP<sup>9</sup> (any other functional projection identified in the split-COMP system is irrelevant for the issue at hand and is omitted for simplicity of exposition).

#### 4.2 Focus Phrase

One of the most influential focus theories in generative grammar – and the one that has been first applied to cleft constructions – was put forward in Brody (1990). His assumptions are based on data from Hungarian, a

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<sup>9</sup>\*<sup>9</sup> represents recursivity of a projection.

language with an invariant preverbal focus position.<sup>10</sup>

The facts for Hungarian are the following. In a neutral sentence (no focus or negation), the verb is immediately preceded by the verbal prefix, if there is one (52a) and (52b). In case the sentence contains a focus operator (or negation), the immediately preverbal position is occupied by the focal constituent (or negation), and the verbal prefix surfaces behind the verb (53a) and (53b). The immediately preverbal position is optionally preceded by one or more constituents (the topics), which is the case in (52a) and (52b).

- (52) a. A pap meg-keresztel-t-e Erzsi-t.  
the priest.NOM PREF-baptise-PAST-3SG Lizzy-ACC  
'The priest baptised Lizzy.'
- b. Erzsi-t meg-keresztel-t-e a pap.  
Lizzy-ACC PREF-baptise-PAST-3SG the priest-NOM  
'The priest baptised Lizzy.'
- (53) a. [<sub>FocP</sub> A pap [<sub>Foc'</sub> keresztel-t-e meg Erzsi-t. ]]  
the priest.NOM baptise-PAST-3SG PREF Lizzy-ACC  
'The PRIEST baptised Lizzy.'
- b. [<sub>FocP</sub> Erzsi-t [<sub>Foc'</sub> keresztel-t-e meg a pap. ]]  
Lizzy-ACC baptise-PAST-3SG pref the priest.NOM  
'The priest baptised LIZZY.'

The above examples may easily lead one to the conclusion that the verbal prefix and the focussed constituent are in complementary distribution in the immediately preverbal position. This, however, is not the case for Brody. He assumes that the verb moves from  $V^0$  to  $Foc^0$ , and so it crosses (and leaves behind) the preverbal base position of the prefix. This yields the order *focussed constituent* > *verb* > *verbal prefix*. Derivations for (52a) and (53b) are given in Figure 1a and 1b, where irrelevant details are omitted. Verb movement from  $V^0$  to  $Foc^0$  is triggered by feature-checking: the focussed constituent receives the focus feature from the verb. For this to happen a local specifier-head relation has to be established, just like in the case of *wh*-movement. This condition is formulated in the Focus Criterion:

<sup>10</sup>Hungarian may contain postverbal FocPs, too, but these are licensed only in the presence of a preverbal focus, as argued in É. Kiss (1998b). Postverbal foci are derived by iteration of FocP. The verb undergoes successive cyclic head-movement and leaves a copy in each  $Foc_0$  position. The head of the chain being pronounced, all constituents sitting in the specifier position of the lower FocPs become postverbal. Thus a postverbal FocP is a test for the focushood of the immediately preverbal constituent.

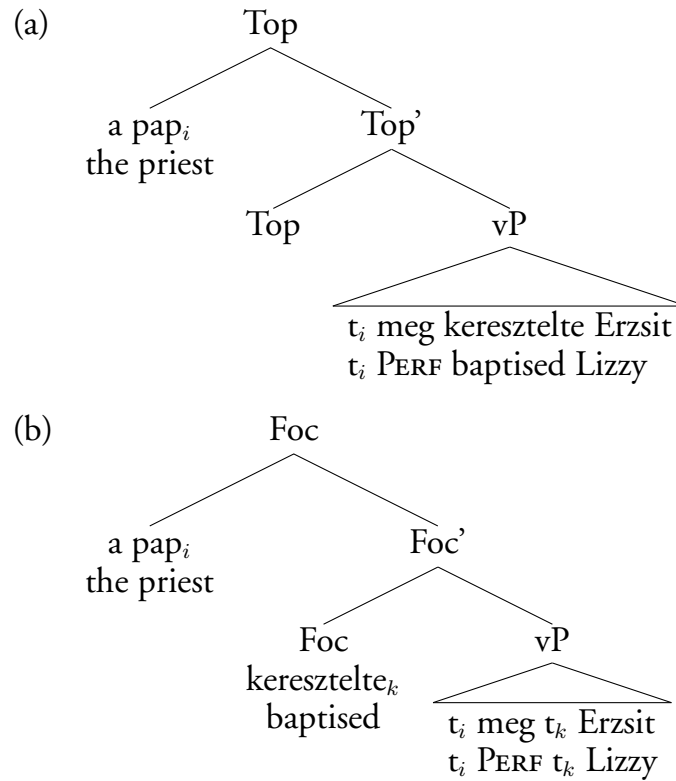


Figure 1

- (54) Focus Criterion (Brody 1990: 208)
- a. At S-structure and LF the spec of an FP must contain a +f-phrase
  - b. at LF all +f-phrases must be in an FP.

This position is slightly modified in Brody (1995), where it is argued that the crucial notion for feature checking is the 'checking domain' and not the specifier-head configuration. In the revised form of the theory the checking feature resides both in the attractor and the attractee.

- (55) Modified Focus Criterion
- a. At S-structure and LF the checking domain of a +F XP must contain a +f phrase
  - b. At LF all +f phrases must be in the checking domain of a +F XP.

Of the two subparts of the Focus Criterion, (55b) is claimed to be part of Universal Grammar and thus to hold in every language. (55a), on the other hand, is parametrized. Languages with a strong +F feature exhibit the required local relation already at S-structure, while languages with a weak +F feature do not. These languages – in keeping with Procrastinate – delay movement until the invisible post-Spell-Out component of syntax (in a two-cycle system, as in Chomsky 1995). To give an example for both types of languages, Brody proposes that Hungarian has a strong +F feature, whereas English establishes the relevant configuration only at the Logical Form.

We now turn to theories that posit a FocP within cleft constructions.

### 4.3 Cleft as focus: É. Kiss (1998a, 1999)

#### 4.3.1 *The proposal*

É. Kiss (1999) offers an analysis of cleft sentences along the lines of Brody's focus theory. She, however, challenges the claim that English has only covert focus movement. In her approach, [Spec; FocP] can be filled already in visible syntax. The constituent that can occupy this position is the clefted item. According to this proposal the only difference between English and Hungarian is that while in Hungarian, FocP selects an AspP (or, in the absence of a verbal prefix, a vP), FocP takes a CP complement in English. This CP is the cleft clause.

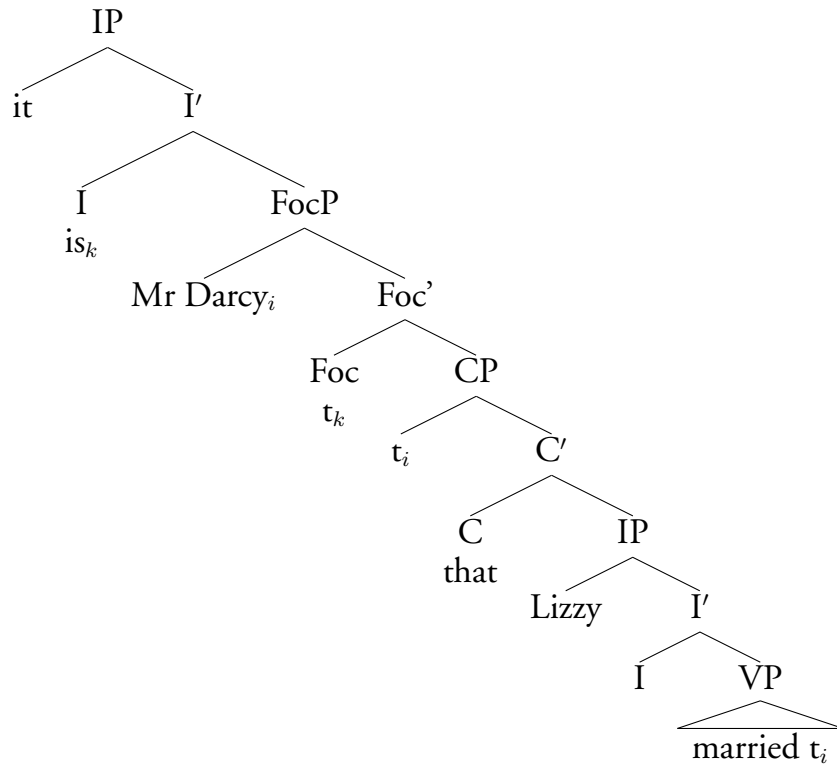
The derivation of a cleft construction starts with the construction of the lower CP. The clefted constituent is merged in this clause and bears a +f feature. The embedded CP is merged with Foc<sup>0</sup>. The head of FocP has to harbour a verb, just like in Hungarian. The main verb of the subordinate clause cannot move out of its own vP, and an embedded auxiliary cannot leave the CP. Since Foc<sup>0</sup> cannot be lexicalised via Move, a dummy *be* is merged into this position.

At this point, the clefted constituent is moved to [Spec; FocP] through the intermediate landing site [Spec; CP]. This operation brings the +f phrase (i.e. the clefted constituent) into the checking domain of the +F XP (i.e. the FocP), thus the requirement stated in the first part of the Focus Criterion (55a) is fulfilled.

In the remaining part of the derivation, FocP is selected by I<sup>0</sup>. *Be* moves to I<sup>0</sup> to combine with tense and agreement morphemes, and [Spec; IP] is filled by a pleonastic element, *it*. *Be* agrees in number with *it* and its tense is a default present or a copy of the tense in the lower clause.

To illustrate such a derivation for a specific example, the phrase structure





**Figure 2:** *It is Mr Darcy that Lizzy married.*

of the sentence *It is Mr Darcy that Lizzy married* is shown in Figure 2.<sup>11</sup> This proposal involves the promotion of the clefted constituent from the embedded clause to the main clause, and can therefore easily account for the connectedness effects of cleft clauses.

This analysis, however, cannot be maintained when the cleft clause is headed by a *wh*-element, as in (56). In this case, the would-be intermediate landing site [Spec; CP] is already filled, so the clefted constituent cannot be extracted from the embedded clause.

(56) It was Mr Darcy who Lizzy married.

É. Kiss argues that in these cases the clefted constituent is merged directly in [Spec; FocP] and it 'is associated with the *wh*-chain in the embedded clause by coindexing' (É. Kiss 1999: 225). Given that chains of both coindexation

<sup>11</sup>Note that this FocP is different from the one identified in Rizzi (2002). Rizzi's FocP is positioned above IP in the CP layer of the clause. Two FocPs of different positions are hypothesised in Drubig (2003), too.

and movement can display connectedness effects (Cinque 1990), we get the desired results for reflexivisation either way.

Another case where internal merge in [Spec; FocP] is inapplicable is when the clefted constituent denotes the subject of the cleft clause.

- (57) a. It was Lizzy who married Mr Darcy.  
b. It was Lizzy that married Mr Darcy.

Movement of the clefted element in (57a) is blocked by the *wh*-operator heading the lower clause. In (57b) the ECP prevents the extraction: the complementiser would block the proper government of the trace.

So far we have seen two cases when only base-generation is available for clefts. As É. Kiss herself admits, in cleft clauses headed by *that*, 'the base-generated analysis cannot be excluded either' (É. Kiss 1999: 225), as it may well be the case that these, too, contain a covert relative *wh*-element.

#### 4.3.2 *Advantages of the FocP analysis*

É. Kiss's analysis captures parallelisms between such genetically unrelated languages as English and Hungarian, and she offers a unified theory of exhaustive identification across languages. Furthermore, many of the syntactic and semantic properties of clefts enumerated in Section 3 fall out directly from the theory without additional stipulations, as demonstrated in É. Kiss (1999).

The clefted element must be a constituent because only constituents can be merged or moved into any syntactic position. Under this proposal, the clefted element forms a syntactic constituent with the cleft clause. The constituent they make up is FocP.

That the clefted constituent expresses exhaustive identification follows from its syntactic position, the specifier position of the FocP. The presuppositionality of clefts follows from their role of exhaustive identification. Exhaustive identification presupposes a set of entities *A* the predicate can possibly hold for; thus anything that expresses exhaustive identification must be presuppositional at the same time.

Subscribing to the view that exhaustive identification is complement formation (Szabolcsi & Zwarts 1993) and identification with exclusion (Kenei 1986), the analysis makes certain predictions as to what kind of elements qualify as cleftable. É. Kiss argues that complement formation can operate only on individual items, so only constituents denoting such entities are possible targets of clefting. DPs and PPs are clearly such constituents, so their relatively free cleftability is expected. This theory also predicts that

when a DP does not denote an individual (e.g. when used predicatively), it cannot be clefted.<sup>12</sup>

- (58) a. It is a surgeon that took out my appendix.  
b. \*It is a surgeon that our son became.

Other phrases, such as APs, AdvPs and clauses do not denote individual items; consequently, their limited cleftability is not surprising. It is also predicted that they are cleftable when they are individualised (i.e. listed or contrasted):

- (59) a. \*It was happily that I went home. (non-contrastive AdvP)  
b. It is only temporarily that they closed down the Olympic Stadium.  
(*only* is an inherently focal particle; *temporarily* is contrasted with *permanently/for a long time*)
- (60) a. \*It was tired that he was. (É. Kiss 1998a: 218)  
(non-contrastive AP)  
b. It was not sick that he was but tired. (É. Kiss 1998a: 218)  
(*sick* is contrasted with *tired*)

Although Delahunty (1984) argues that what seem to be clefted clauses are in fact clefted DPs and PPs (see footnote 4), É. Kiss's analysis does not rule out the clefting of clauses in principle.

Expletives cannot be clefted because they are non-referential, thus exhaustive identification and complement formation cannot operate on them. Phrases modified by *even* are ineligible for clefting because they implement identification with inclusion and not exclusion, which means that the complement set of the identified subset cannot be delineated unambiguously.

Universal quantifiers are non-cleftable for the very same reason (no complement set can be assigned to them for which the predicate expressed in the embedded clause does not hold). Phrases modified by *also* are cleftable precisely when they identify a set of individuals and at the same time exclude others.

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<sup>12</sup>The anonymous reviewer points out, however, that the following predicational cleft is grammatical:

- (i) When I was young, it was a policeman that I wanted to be.

See my proposal on the condition of cleftability in Section 5.4, which does not depend on the clefted constituent denoting an individual.

- (61) – Doug gave a lift to almost everyone.  
 – \*Yes, it was also to Carol that Doug gave a lift.
- (62) – Doug gave a lift only to Carol.  
 – No, it was also to Judi that Doug gave a lift.

Connectedness effects are also easily accounted for.

- (63) It was himself<sub>i</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> that Dorian Gray saw t<sub>i</sub> in the mirror]
- (64) It was [some film starring Julianna Margulies]<sub>i</sub> that everybody wanted to watch t<sub>i</sub>. ( $\exists > \forall$ ,  $\forall > \exists$ )

In (63) the tail of the chain is c-commanded by *Dorian Gray*, so the requirement for reflexivisation is fulfilled. In (64) the  $\forall > \exists$  reading is obtained when the clefted constituent reconstructs in the embedded clause at LF and thus *everybody* scopes over *some film*.

In the case of PP clefting, the subordinate clause lacks the otherwise obligatory preposition (*It was to John that I spoke* vs. \**It was to John that I spoke to*) because in a chain only one copy of a lexical item is spelled out in the default case.<sup>13</sup>

As noted in Section 4.1, identificational focus has non-nominative case-marking in many languages. Thus, if the clefted constituent is identificational focus, it is not surprising that cleft pronouns bear non-Nominative case in standard English. In some dialects, however, the cleft pronoun is in the Nominative form (c.f. Footnote 5). É. Kiss assumes that in these dialects the default form is the same as the Nominative form, so the cleft pronoun does not, in fact, bear Nominative case in these dialects either.

#### 4.3.3 Potential problems

É. Kiss's proposal explains several properties of cleft sentences. Yet a number of problems relating to the analysis also arise. We address these issues below.

Firstly, É. Kiss claims that  $\text{Foc}^0$  has to be filled by a verb, but since the embedded verb cannot leave the lower CP, it is filled by a dummy element. If this is the case indeed, then why is this position filled by *be* and not *do*? In all other cases where English uses an expletive verb (question formation, negation or in SigmaP for emphatic affirmation), this verb is *do*. In addition, all other uses of the copula are non-dummy. Should É. Kiss's argument go through, English would have two dummy verbs, *do* and *be*. But the cleft

<sup>13</sup>Resumptive pronouns are often cited as examples of the marked case. They are generally taken to be the spell-out of the Phi-features in the lower copy.

sentence would be the only type of construction used with *be*. I think that this is an unnecessary complication.

Secondly, the outlined analysis wrongly predicts that the element in  $I^0$  and the clefted constituent are always adjacent. When there is no modal auxiliary in the matrix clause, the prediction corresponds to the facts indeed. Problems arise, however, when a modal is present, as shown in (65):

- (65) It may be the Prime Minister who negotiates about the nuclear missile programme.

Under standard assumptions, the modal auxiliary occupies  $I^0$ . But if  $I^0$  selects FocP, as in Figure 2, and the clefted constituent is in [Spec; FocP], then where is the copula? We thus need a head position between  $I^0$  and Foc $^0$ . Example (66) is even more problematic: here we need two different head positions between  $I^0$  and Foc $^0$ .

- (66) It may have been the Prime Minister who negotiates about the nuclear missile programme.

Thirdly, the explanation for the grammaticality contrasts in (59) and (60) in terms of complement formation also seems to be problematic. According to the Generalized Quantifier Theory, APs, ADVPs, vPs and also predicative DPs are sets. In (60a), for instance, *tired* is a set that contains all the individuals that have the property 'tired'. It is not clear why one could not unambiguously delineate the complement set of this set (i.e. the set that contains all individuals that do not have the property 'tired') and so why (60a) is ungrammatical.

Finally, there seems to exist some evidence that the cleft pronoun is a referential element, not a pleonastic one. Gundel (1977) demonstrates that Russian cleft sentences are introduced by the word *èto*, which corresponds to English *it/that*. Given that Russian does not have pleonastic subjects (67), the *èto* of clefts cannot be a dummy subject.

- (67) a. Morozit  
is.freezing  
'It's freezing.' (Gundel 1977: 553)  
b. \*Èto morozit.
- (68) Èto ne (byl) Ivan, tot kto zvonil  
PRON not was Ivan the.one who called  
'It was not Ivan who was the one who called.' (Gundel 1977: 554)

If we want to assume full parallelism between clefts in Russian and English, then the English cleft pronoun is not an expletive either. Furthermore, Hedberg (2000) claims that in English clefts *it* can be replaced by a demonstrative pronoun precisely because it is referential.

#### 4.4 Meinunger (1996)

##### 4.4.1 It-clefts

An account of clefts very similar to the one put forward by É. Kiss, but independently proposed, was presented in Meinunger (1996). The two analyses share the assumptions that (i) the clefted constituent is in [Spec; FocP], (ii) this position (at least in certain cases) is a derived one and (iii) the cleft clause is embedded under FocP.

The analyses differ only in the finer details of the proposed structure. For instance, FocP is dominated by TopP in Meinunger's analysis. The cleft pronoun occupies the position in [Spec; TopP] and the copula is base-generated in Top<sup>0</sup>. As for the referential or expletive nature of the cleft pronoun, although he does not explicitly say so, I presume that in Meinunger's system the cleft pronoun must be referential, as topics are referential by definition. Non-referential constituents cannot be topicalised, as in the Hungarian examples below:

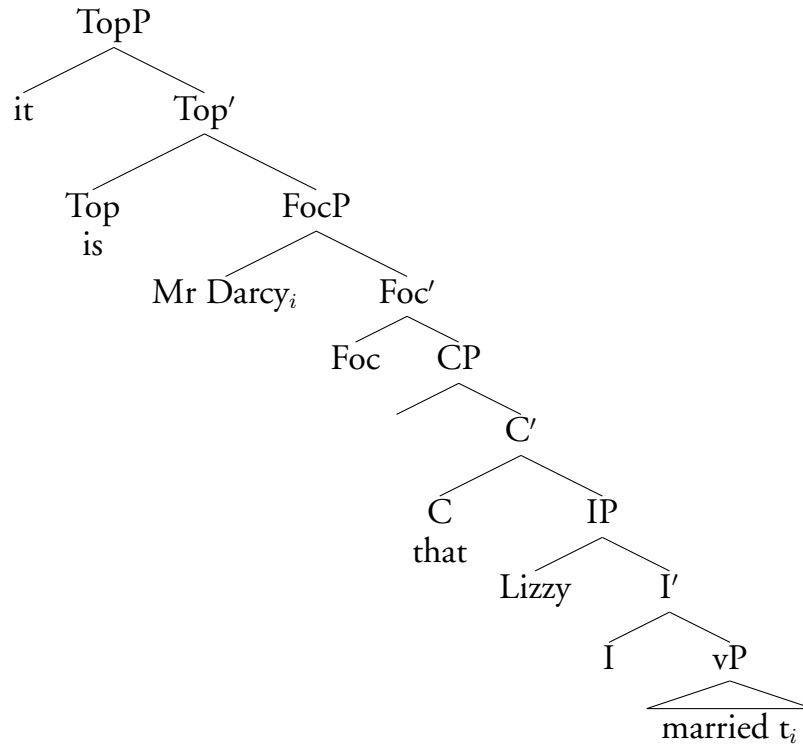
- (69) a. [<sub>TopP</sub> A grafikus [<sub>vP</sub> rajzol-t egy fá-t]]  
           the graphic.artist.NOM draw-PAST-3SG a tree-ACC  
           'The graphic artist drew a tree.'<sup>14</sup>  
       b. \*[[<sub>TopP</sub> Egy fá-t [<sub>vP</sub> rajzol-t a grafikus]]  
           a tree-ACC draw-PAST-3SG the graphic.artist.NOM  
           'The graphic artist drew a tree.'<sup>15</sup>

The phrase *a grafikus* ('the graphic.artist.NOM') is referential and thus topicalisable. The phrase *egy fá-t* ('a tree-ACC') is non-referential. It is a Heimian indefinite: a variable with the restriction 'tree'. Being non-referential, it cannot be in topic position.

Another difference between the two approaches is that in Meinunger's view clefts are monoclausal. All the functional projections on the left periphery of the cleft construction are extended projections of the main verb in the clefted clause. This means that the CP selected by FocP is not an

<sup>14</sup>*Draw* in Hungarian is a so-called definiteness-effect verb. In a thematically unmarked sentence its object cannot be definite, because it is not present in the universe of discourse before the utterance.

<sup>15</sup>Example (69b) is perfectly felicitous with *egy fá-t* in focus.



**Figure 3:** *It is Mr Darcy that Lizzy married.*

independent sentence. There is only one CP layer in cleft constructions, and within that CP layer there is some phrase below FocP that can host complementisers. Here (and in Meinunger (1996)) it is labelled CP, but this is only a matter of notation, for the exact identity of this phrase is left unspecified in the analysis. Under Meinunger's assumptions the structure of the sentence in Figure 2 is shown in Figure 3.

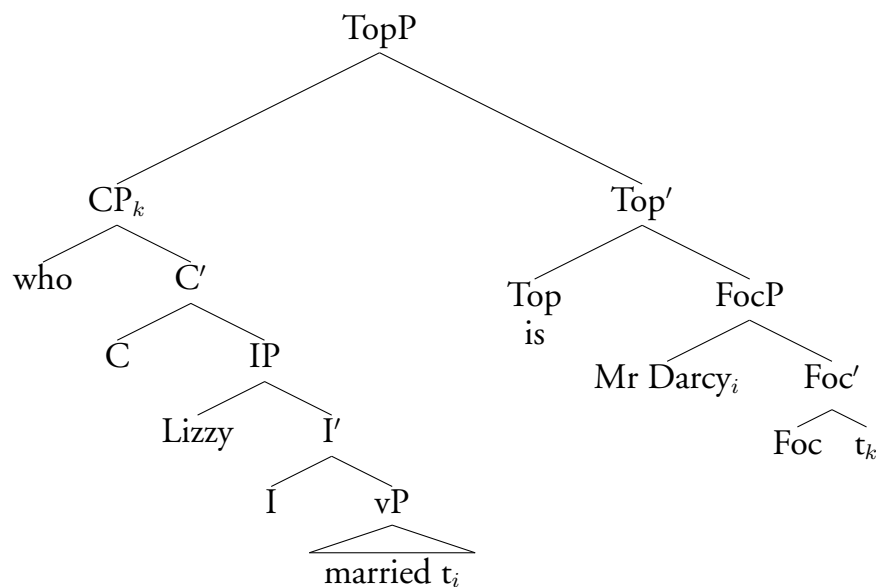
As for the semantic interpretation of clefts, Meinunger follows the *Alternative Semantics for Focus*, developed in Roots (1992). Focus movement turns the closed term *Lizzy marries Mr Darcy* into an open proposition, where the position of the object is filled by a variable (*Lizzy marries x*). In this sense, the cleft clause is similar to questions. The open proposition serves as the predicate of the semantic value of the clefted constituent. That is, in Figure 3 it is predicated of *Mr Darcy* that *Lizzy married him*. The focus semantic value of the embedded CP in Figure 3 is shown in (70):

- (70)  $\| [\text{Lizzy marries } [\text{Mr Darcy}]_F] \| ^f = \mathbf{MARRY} (\mathbf{l}, \mathbf{x}) \text{ } \mathbf{x} \in \mathbf{E}$   
 $\mathbf{E}$  = domain of individuals

Identificational focus entails the exclusion of alternatives. The possible values of the variable constitute the so-called context set, which takes the form of partial order (semi-lattice). By choosing one node of the lattice the co-operative speaker excludes all higher nodes (Grice's maxim of quantity).

#### 4.4.2 Wh-clefts

That there is a close relationship between *it*-clefts and *wh*-clefts has always been acknowledged, and many analyses tried to derive one construction from the other (e.g. Gundel 1977; Emonds 1976). Meinunger proposes that *it*-clefts and *wh*-clefts have the same structure until a very late point in the derivation. The only difference between the two types of clefts is that *wh*-clefts contain one more step: the lower CP is moved to [Spec; TopP], which can be viewed as a case of overt expletive-replacement. The advantage of this analysis is that the copula and the clefted constituent occupy the same structural position in both types of constructions: Top<sup>0</sup> and [Spec; FocP] respectively. This corresponds to our intuition that in *wh*-clefts, too, the post-copular position is contrastive and once we specify its value, we exclude all the other possible alternatives. The pseudo-cleft counterpart of Figure 3 is shown in Figure 4:



**Figure 4:** *It is Mr Darcy that Lizzy married.*

That the position of the cleft clause in pseudoclefts is a derived one is corroborated by binding effects, too, as illustrated in (71):



- (71) a. What Earnest saw was (a picture of) himself on the cover of the Times.  
 b. What Mrs Smith is is proud of her son.  
 c. \*What she<sub>i</sub> claimed is that Abby<sub>i</sub> was in charge of the bank account.

#### 4.4.3 Problems

A question that necessarily arises with regard to Meinunger's analysis is the identity of the lower CP. In Rizzi's split-CP system there is indeed a phrase below FocP that hosts complementisers. This phrase is labelled FinP, but in standard theory it is not assumed to harbour overt elements in English. If we intend to maintain the monoclausal analysis, one option is to say that FinP can be overtly filled by *that*. This is very unlikely, however. In languages where both ForceP and FinP can be overtly lexicalised (e.g. in Italian only one of them at a time; in Welsh both at the same time), the two types of phrases host complementisers of different phonetic forms. The other option would be that the CP-layer between ForceP and FocP is recursive, so under FocP there is a ForceP (within the same CP-layer). Positing a third type of phrase that can host complementisers is another potential solution, but such a phrase is independently unmotivated and cross-linguistically unattested. I find all these alternatives problematic, which leads me to conclude that a biclausal approach is superior.

The syntactic position of the cleft pronoun is also problematic. This pronoun undergoes subject-auxiliary inversion in questions, which shows that it is in the canonical subject position. But in this case the cleft pronoun is placed into [Spec; TopP].

The third problem relates to the relative position of the cleft pronoun and the copula. We have seen that (65) and (66) are problematic for É. Kiss because we need two head positions more than what her analysis provides. But (65) and (66) pose comparable problems for Meinunger, too. In his analysis, the cleft pronoun and the copula are base-generated in the specifier and head positions of the same functional phrase (TopP). Meinunger does not seem to assume any other phrases above TopP apart from ForceP, so his proposal falls short of accounting for how two auxiliaries can intervene between *it* and *be*.

Finally, the fact that the cleft clause in *it*-clefts can be headed by a *wh*-element, the complementiser *that* or a null complementiser but the preposed clause in pseudo-clefts is always introduced by a *wh*-element is troublesome for the analysis of pseudo-clefts. Meinunger also realises this and suggests two possible explanations.

The first involves feature matching. According to this, the head of TopP has a +wh feature, so the preposed clause must be marked for +wh, too, by specifier-head agreement. But Top<sup>0</sup> is generally not assumed to be marked as +wh, so why should it be marked so just in pseudoclefts?

The second suggested motivation relates to the fact that preposed or sentence-initial clauses must be marked by either a complementiser or a *wh*-element. Since in this case the preposed sentence is an open expression, it has to appear in the form of interrogatives. This is a more convincing argument. But the cleft clause is an open expression *in situ* (i.e. in *it*-clefts) as well, and in that position +wh marking is not necessary. Thus we might expect that when the cleft clause is preposed, a complementiser, too, should be sufficient.

## 5 THE PROPOSAL

In Section 4, I summarised analyses of the cleft construction as focus. I assume that for the most part they are on the right track. In this section, I present further evidence that cleft constructions contain a focus phrase and I present my analysis of the cleft construction. I shall assume, in line with Meinunger (1996) and É. Kiss (1999), that the clefted constituent is in [Spec; FocP], but I will diverge from both analyses in several respects.

### 5.1 The clefted constituent is syntactic focus: evidence from accent placement

In the previous chapter, we have seen that there are numerous advantages of placing the clefted constituent into [Spec; FocP]. One might argue, however, that positing a FocP in cleft constructions is unnecessary if the clefted element is merely semantic and not syntactic focus. This way we would still have all the advantages of the focus-analysis. In this section, I argue that a FocP is indeed necessary for the analysis of cleft sentences.

Evidence in favour of the syntactic focus analysis comes from the intonation and stress pattern of clefts. Selkirk (1996) demonstrates that in English, German and Dutch there is a systematic relationship between the distribution of high pitch accents (H\*) and focus placement. This is formulated in the Basic Focus Rule:

- (72) *Basic Focus Rule*  
An accented word is F-marked.

At S-structure every focus constituent is F-marked, thus the relation ultimately holds between pitch accent and F-marking of syntactic constituents.

To put it differently, the implication is that if a constituent is accented, it is focussed. Focus for Selkirk is semantic focus. She does not consider the possibility of a separate FocP in English (nor does she discuss the stress pattern of clefts): for her, focussing can only ensue from accenting.

The placement of the H\* pitch accent in a sentence is relatively free. In (73), for instance, it can fall on any of the indicated positions. Different placements of the pitch accent entail different F-markings and thus different contrasts, of course.

- (73) a. Mr. DARcy bought an engagement ring for Lizzy. (vs. Mr Bingley)  
 b. Mr. Darcy BOUGHT an engagement ring for Lizzy. (vs. sent a ring)  
 c. Mr. Darcy bought an enGAGEment ring for Lizzy. (vs. another type of ring)  
 d. Mr. Darcy bought an engagement ring for LIzzy. (vs. for Jane)

It is also possible to place more pitch accents in a sentence, for example:

- (74) a. Mr. DARcy bought an engagement ring for LIzzy.  
 b. Mr. DARcy bought an enGAGEment ring for Lizzy.

In light of Selkirk's theory, consider the distribution of the H\* pitch accent in cleft sentences:

- (75) a. It was Mr DARcy that bought an engagement ring for Lizzy.  
 b. \*It was Mr Darcy that BOUGHT an engagement ring for Lizzy.  
 c. \*It was Mr Darcy that bought an enGAGEment ring for Lizzy.  
 d. \*It was Mr Darcy that bought an engagement ring for LIzzy.  
 e. \*It was Mr Darcy that bought an engagement ring for Lizzy.  
 (cleft sentence without F-marking)

(75a) is the clefted counterpart of (73a): the constituent *Mr Darcy* is accented and thus focussed in both sentences. But there is a striking difference between the two sentences in the possible locations of the pitch accent. In (73a) the pitch accent could appear on any of the major constituents of the sentence, which means that any of these constituents can be focussed, as shown in (73b–d). This is not so in (75a). If the pitch accent falls on any other constituent than the clefted element, the sentence is ungrammatical, as demonstrated in (75b–d). These data indicate that cleft constructions – unlike their non-cleft counterparts – have an invariable location for accent

and thus focus. Note also that while (73a) would be grammatical without a H\* pitch accent,<sup>16</sup> (75a) is ungrammatical without an H\* accent (75e).

To sum up the discussion so far, we have found that (i) H\* accent and F-marking is optional in non-cleft sentences but obligatory in cleft sentences, and (ii) the location of accent and F-marking is free in non-cleft sentences but fixed in cleft sentences. Why is this so?

The data fall out nicely if we assume that besides semantic focus, English has structural focus as well, and that structural focus materializes in the cleft construction. To account for the relationship between pitch accent and focus, I propose the following modification to Selkirk's Basic Focus Rule:

- (76) *Modified Basic Focus Rule*
- a. An accented word is focus.
  - b. A focussed word is accented.

This formulation of the Basic Focus Rule ensures that the implication between accent and focus holds in both directions. Without (76b) structural focus could be accentless.

The Modified Basic Focus Rule explains the difference between (73) and (75) in the following way. In (73) there is no structural focus, therefore accenting is not obligatory in the sentence. In this case, (76b) is vacuously satisfied. If we want to focus some element, any constituent can be accented and interpreted as semantic focus via (76a). Obligatory accent on the clefted element in (75) follows because the clefted constituent is in structural focus. If this constituent is not accented, the second part of the Modified Basic Focus Rule is violated, which renders the sentence ungrammatical.

## 5.2 Structure

In the previous section I have argued that the stress pattern of clefts provides evidence for the FocP analysis. In this section I turn to the structure of cleft sentences and try to find out the exact position of FocP. My starting assumptions are the following: the cleft pronoun occupies the canonical subject position [Spec; TP] and the clefted constituent is in [Spec; FocP]. In contrast to É. Kiss (1999), I will assume that I<sup>0</sup> does not (always) select FocP. This is illustrated in Figure 5.

<sup>16</sup>Non-cleft sentences, too, have to contain some kind of pitch accent. The point is that the pitch accent of non-clefts is not necessarily high. Depending on the intended interpretation it can be any type of accent. In cleft sentences, however, the pitch accent on the clefted constituent cannot be any type of accent.

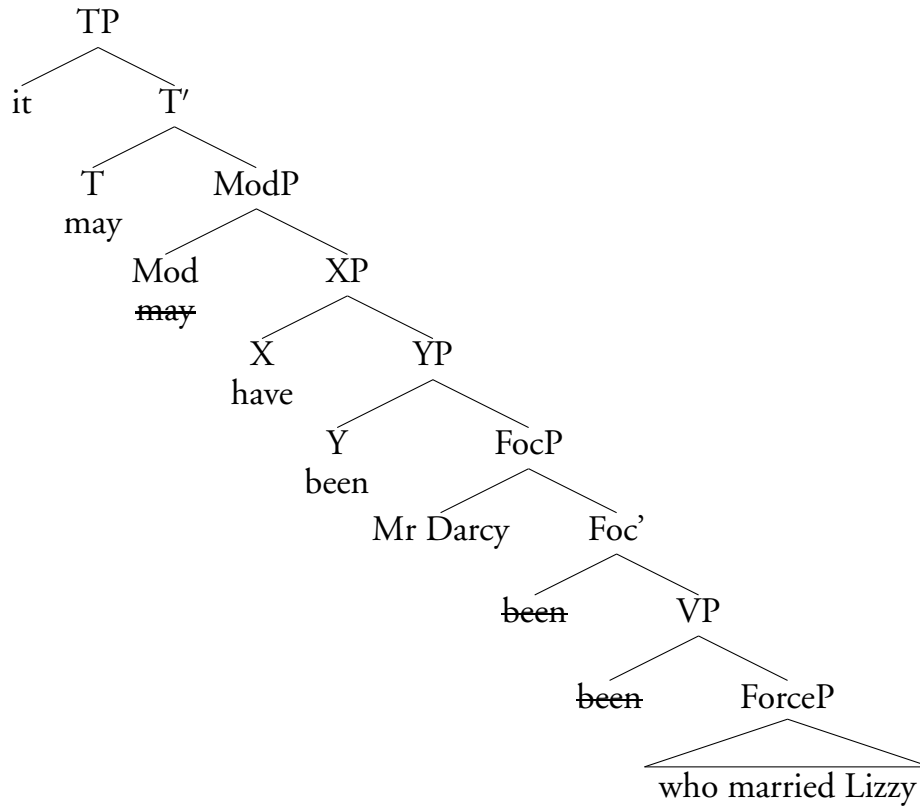


Figure 5: *It may have been Mr Darcy who married Lizzy.*

In PF-linearisation *be* always precedes the clefted constituent. It may have been this fact that led Meinunger to assume that the copula originates above FocP. Under my assumptions, however, *be* must have a copy in Foc<sup>0</sup>, because it functions there as a relator between its specifier (the clefted constituent) and its complement (the cleft clause). The relation expressed in this case is that of identity. Also, I assume in contrast to É. Kiss (1999) that *be* is a contentful verb, not an expletive. The function of the copula in a cleft sentence is not limited to the lexicalisation of Foc<sup>0</sup>, *be* is just as contentful in clefts as in any other specificational sentence, for instance (77).

- (77) Barack Obama is the first Afro-American president of the United States.

In my analysis, the copula in cleft constructions is the same verb as the copula of identificational sentences.<sup>17</sup> If this is so, then *be* in clefts also

<sup>17</sup>Chinese, too, uses the copula in both identifying sentences and focal constructions (Huba Bartos, p.c.).

originates in a verbal projection and  $\text{Foc}^0$  is a derived position. Remember that in Brody's analysis  $\text{FocP}$  dominates  $\text{vP}$ , and É. Kiss (1999) has to assume that in English  $\text{Foc}^0$  takes a  $\text{CP}$  complement. Under the present approach this stipulation is unnecessary:  $\text{Foc}^0$  takes a  $\text{vP}$  complement in both English and Hungarian. My analysis eliminates the need for postulating two different expletive verbs in English, allows a unified treatment of the occurrences of *be* in cleft sentences and in non-cleft specificational clauses, and offers parallel c-selectional criteria for  $\text{FocP}$  in English and Hungarian.

We are now left with the task of finding a proper label for  $\text{XP}$  and  $\text{YP}$ . Following a suggestion of the anonymous reviewer, I identify  $\text{YP}$  as  $\text{VP}_{\text{perf}}$ , as the form of the verb in  $\text{YP}$  is perfect, and perfectivity is expressed by the morpheme rather than the auxiliary. Let us turn to  $\text{XP}$  now. The element following a modal in English is always in its bare form, which indicates that  $\text{XP}$  is headed by a null morpheme. Taking my cue from the reviewer, I take this to be the realisation of Tense.

In Figure 5 the node hosting the modal is also labelled Tense, but this does not lead to a contradiction. Cinque (1999) proposes that there are three Tense Phrases in the functional sequence:  $\text{T}_{\text{past}}$ ,  $\text{T}_{\text{future}}$  and  $\text{T}_{\text{anterior}}$ . This means that both the phrase hosting the cleft pronoun and  $\text{XP}$  can be tense phrases, as in Figure 6. Alternatively,  $\text{XP}$  might be taken to be  $\text{AgrP}$  (assuming that tense and agreement are separated in English).

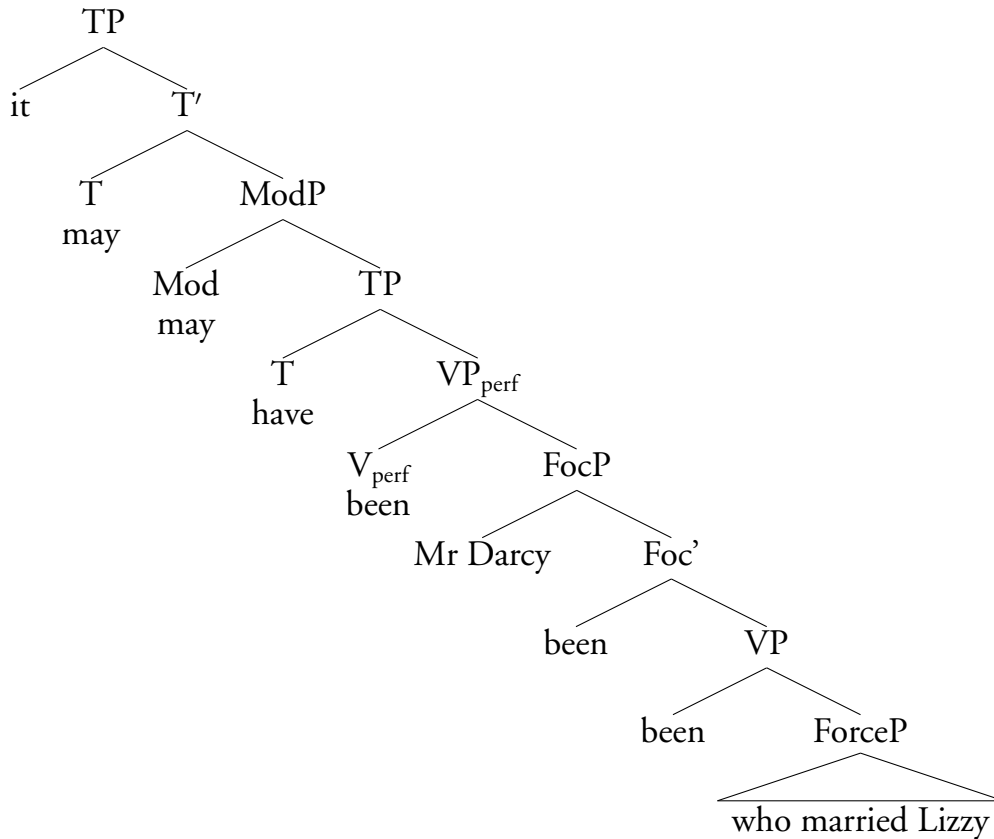
### 5.3 Deriving tense harmony and present tense

#### 5.3.1 *Outlining the analysis*

In cleft sentences without either a modal auxiliary or the auxiliary *have*, the copula moves to  $\text{T}^0$ . Recall that in this case the tense of *be* is either present or it is the same as the tense of the embedded clause. Under my assumptions, the reason for this is that the tense feature in the matrix clause is unvalued.

Unvalued features cause a crash at the interfaces; therefore they must be valued in the course of the derivation. Valuing of features is performed by the operation Agree, but the unvalued feature may be assigned a default value, too. I am going to argue below that tense harmony and present tense are the instantiations of Agree and default value assignment, respectively. Both methods eliminate the unvalued features of the matrix  $\text{T}$ ; consequently the derivation can satisfy the principle of Full Interpretation (FI).

Tense harmony obtains when the tense feature of the superordinate  $\text{T}$  is valued through matching with the lower  $\text{T}/\text{v}$ . Agree values the matrix  $\text{T}$ , which thus takes on the value of the goal. The result is that the same morphological tense appears on both  $\text{T}$ s. As far as present tense is concerned, I



**Figure 6:** *It may have been Mr Darcy who married Lizzy.*

concur with É. Kiss (1999) that this is a default tense; and, I add, a default tense is possible precisely because the tense feature of T is unvalued. That present is a default tense in clefts is also supported by Meinunger's (1996) observation that in this case no true temporal setting is triggered. In sum: my proposal is that tense harmony and (default) present tense are repair strategies of the grammar so that the derivation satisfies FI.

### 5.3.2 Technical implementation

In this approach, however, two potential problems present themselves, which need our attention. The first problem relates to the position of the goal. Since the goal has to be visible for the probe, it must not be in the domain of a lower phase. If T probes, the embedded T/v fall into the domain of a lower phase (namely C), so the Phase Impenetrability Condition makes them invisible for operations outside the embedded CP. Agree needs a goal

that is located in the same phase as the probe or on the edge of the lower phase. To circumvent this problem, I propose that if the locus of tense features is C and T only ‘inherits’ them, as in Chomsky (2001), then the matrix T can agree with the embedded C, which is visible for operations in the higher phase.

Let us now turn to the second problem. In Chomsky (2001), a feature enters the derivation unvalued if and only if it is uninterpretable. In standard Minimalism, the tense features of T are considered to be interpretable, so – contrary to my claim – they cannot be unvalued. In Dékány (2006) I resorted to saying that the distinction between interpretable and uninterpretable features is fuzzy anyway, and the Chomskian classification of features into interpretable/uninterpretable groups has not remained undisputed. Legate (2002), for instance, proposes a system in which Phi-features on DPs and tense features on T, too, are uninterpretable. Under her assumptions, one should distinguish between semantic features (which are interpreted at the CI interface) and morpho-syntactic features. It is the latter that drive the derivation. Within this group, some features are valued, others are not; but in either case, they are uninterpretable and are eliminated in the course of Transfer. Thus, in Legate’s analysis one should distinguish between interpretable semantic tense and uninterpretable morphological tense. While my proposal seemed to be fully compatible with such a system of features, I left the detailed development of the idea for further research.

Spelling out my analysis of tense harmony in Legate’s system is still a possibility, but I will explore a different track here: the framework of Pesetsky and Torrego (2006; 2007, henceforth P&T 2006 and 2007) lies at the heart of the proposal developed in what follows. P&T (2007) argue that – contra the Valuation/Interpretability Biconditional of Chomsky (2001) – valuation and interpretability of features should be treated as entirely independent concepts. What this means is that in addition to (78a) and (78b), (78c) and (78d) are also possible combinations of valuation and interpretability.

- (78)
- a. uF < > (uninterpretable, unvalued feature)
  - b. iF val (interpretable, valued feature)
  - c. uF val (uninterpretable, valued feature)
  - d. iF < > (interpretable, unvalued feature)

P&T also propose that in languages like English, where the morphological distinctions relevant for tense are found on the finite verb, the finite V bears an uninterpretable valued tense feature, while the category T bears an interpretable but unvalued tense feature. These assumptions will be crucial in the analysis.



Assuming P&T's treatment of tense features on *v* and *T*, coupled with the idea that the tense feature of the copula is unvalued and uninterpretable, the derivation of tense harmony proceeds as follows. The first step is the building of the embedded *vP*, with *v* bearing a valued uninterpretable tense feature. Next the embedded *T* is merged with its interpretable unvalued tense feature, as shown in Figure 7. *T* probes, and it finds an appropriate goal in *v*. Feature sharing (i.e. Agree) takes place between *T* and *v*, and – as the tense feature on *v* is valued – the tense feature of *T* concomitantly gets valued.

In the higher clause the copula is merged with an uninterpretable unvalued tense feature. The derivation so far is diagrammed in Figure 8, with the dotted line indicating the established Agree relationship. When *be* probes, the closest appropriate goal is the tense feature on *T* in the dependent clause. As this feature has already been valued, Agree between *T* and *be* results in the valuing of the tense feature of the copula.

Next the superordinate *T* is merged, bearing an interpretable unvalued tense feature, as shown in 9. In the final step the matrix *T* probes, Agrees with the already valued tense feature of the copula and gets valued itself. At this point the embedded *v* and *T* as well as *be* and the matrix *T* have the same value of tense.

In this derivation only the tense feature of the lower verb is valued when it enters the derivation, and all the tense features merged higher get valued by (directly or indirectly) agreeing with it. This explains the exceptional direction of tense dependency in clefts, namely that the tense of the superordinate clause is dependent on the tense of the lower clause. Note that the unvalued tense feature on the copula is crucial for the analysis. If this feature was valued, the matrix *T* could and would have to be valued by agreement with *be* (as this is the closest potential goal), so the tense feature of the embedded clause could never end up in the higher clause.

This analysis, in fact, is the exact opposite of the analysis of infinitival complement clauses to raising verbs offered by P&T (2007). P&T argue that in embedded infinitivals the verb has an uninterpretable unvalued tense feature, thus it cannot value the embedded *T* (*iT* < >). The lower *v* and *T* are valued via Feature Sharing (i.e. Agree) with the matrix Tense node, the details of which process need not concern us here. As a result *T* ends up having the same value in both the infinitival and the finite clause. 'This fact, we suggest, is reflected in the semantic dependence of tense interpretation in the embedded clause on the interpretation of tense in the higher clause' (Pesetsky & Torrego 2007: 280).

If this is so, we expect that in the reverse situation, when the tense feature is valued in the lower clause and unvalued in the matrix clause, *T* will

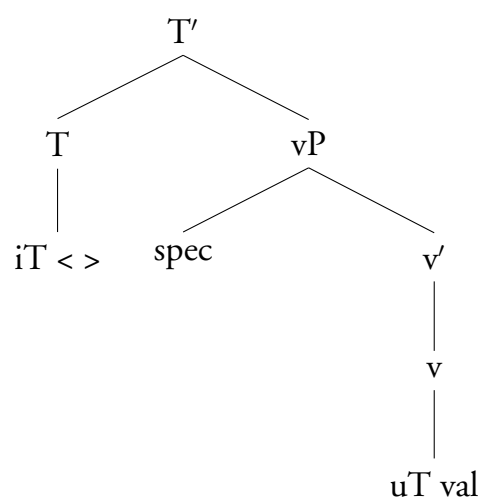


Figure 7

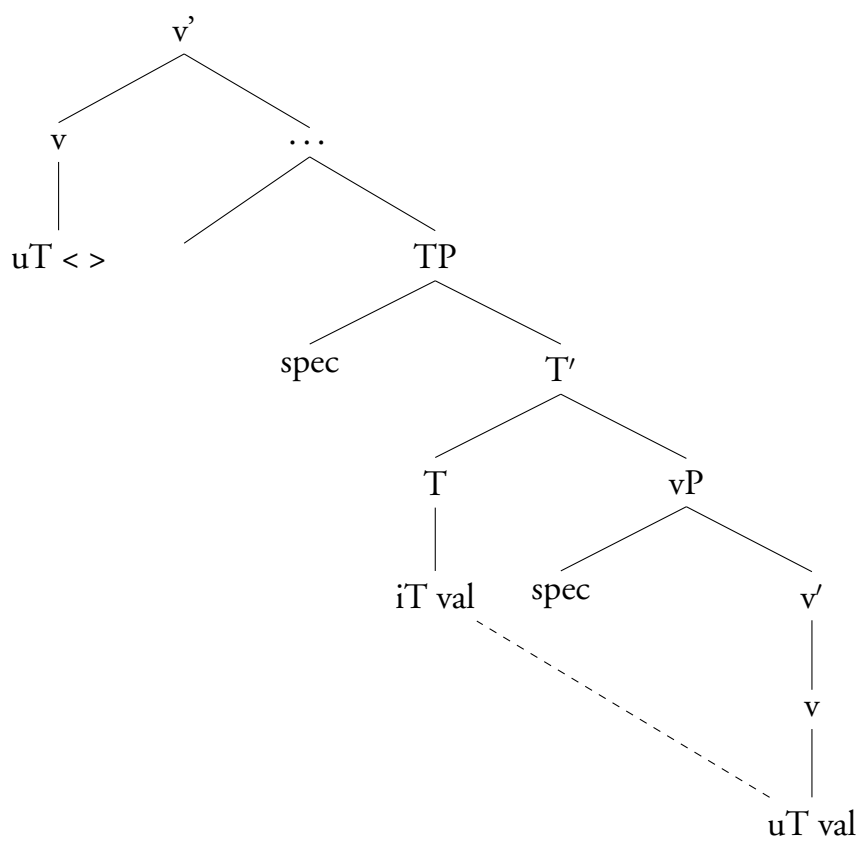
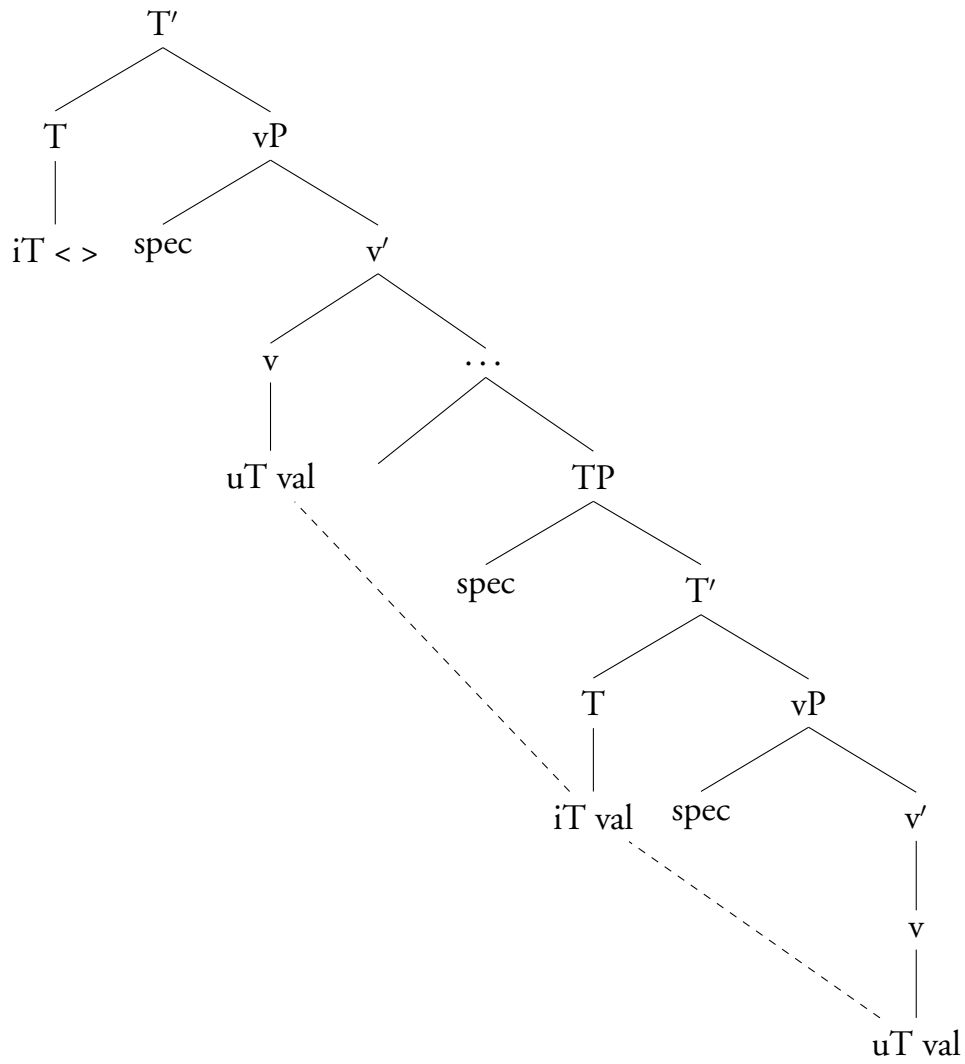


Figure 8



**Figure 9**

have the same value in both clauses, but tense dependency is going to hold in the opposite direction (tense of the higher clause depending on tense of the embedded clause). The fact that clefts display precisely this quirky tense dependency provides support for their containing a verb with an unvalued uninterpretable tense feature. If something along these lines is correct, then tense harmony in cleft constructions supports the abandonment of the Valuation/Interpretability Biconditional and provides evidence for the existence of the feature types *uF val* and *iF < >*.

#### 5.4 Zooming in on the condition for cleftability

As a final point, I would like to turn to the grammaticality differences in (79) and (80).

- (79) a. \*It was happily that I went home.  
       b. It is only temporarily that they closed down the Olympic Stadium.
- (80) a. \*It was tired that he was. (É. Kiss 1998a: 218)  
       b. It was not sick that he was but tired. (É. Kiss 1998a: 218)
- (81) a. \*It is draw a caricature of the boss that I saw him.  
       b. It was give up that Billy didn't want to do. (Delahunty 1984: 111)

The question is: what makes a constituent cleftable? I assume that there are no syntactic constraints as to what types of phrases can occupy [Spec; FocP]. Syntactically speaking, both members of the sentence pairs in (79), (80) and (81) and are equally well-formed. It is semantics that renders (79a), (80a) and (81a) unacceptable (hence a hash mark would be more appropriate than a star). I agree with É. Kiss (1998a) that cleft sentences involve the operations of complement formation and identification by exclusion. But I do not think that an element has to be individualised in order to be clefted. In my opinion, the crucial point is the availability of a context set (C-set) in the sense of Roots (1992). The context set comprises the possible values of the variable contained in the cleft clause. There are predicate variables, too, so C-sets containing predicates are also possible. It is not necessary to individualise them. The context set can be available from the discourse or it can be made explicit by listing, as in (80b). If no C-set is available (e.g. (79a)), then the sentence is unacceptable.

This analysis of cleft sentences makes unnecessary the distinction between syntactic and metalinguistic clefts made in Heggie (1993) (see Section 2.3). Heggie's proposal, the so-called Null Operator Generalisation,

can describe only syntactic clefts (DP/argument clefting), and it is claimed that metalinguistic clefts (clefted adjectives/adjuncts) are subject to different rules and are not to be described within the realms of syntax. Under the present proposal DP/argument and adjective/adjunct clefting obey exactly the same syntactic and semantic conditions and result in the same kind of Phrase-marker.

## 6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this paper I examined the structure of *it*-clefts. As the first step, I gave a brief overview of cleft taxonomy. Then, I listed the syntactic, prosodic and semantic properties of clefts and found that analyses that place the clefted constituent into the specifier position of FocP go a long way towards explaining the data. I argued that the stress and intonation pattern of cleft sentences provides further evidence for such an analysis, and I modified certain previous assumptions about cleft structure. I outlined a system in which the decisive criterion for cleftability is the availability of a context set, and in which the copula of clefts is the same verb as the copula of specificational non-cleft sentences. I also claimed that default present tense and tense harmony on the copula serve the purpose of valuing an unvalued tense feature. This proposal can only be formulated in a system in which the valuation and interpretability of features are independent notions, such as that proposed in Pesetsky & Torrego (2007).

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